

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: TGEN, EMIN, ENRG, CCMS, EAIR, AS

SUBJ: CONNOR TAKES OVER PARTS OF COMMONWEALTH SCIENTIFIC AND
INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ORGANIZATION (CSIRO)

REF: A. CANBERRA 3688 NOTAL

B. CANBERRA 3228 NOTAL

C. STATE 114204 NOTAL

D. CANBERRA 3064

1. AS PART OF JUNE 5 CABINET RESHUFFLE (REF A), PRIME
MINISTER WHITLAM APPROVED TRANSFER OF FIVE CSIRO ENTITIES
TO MINISTERIAL CONTROL OF MINERALS AND ENERGY MINISTER
CONNOR. ENTITIES AFFECTED ARE: SOLAR ENERGY STUDIES UNIT
(SESU) AND DIVISIONS OF CHEMICAL ENGINEERING, MINERAL
CHEMISTRY, MINERAL PHYSICS AND MINERALOGY. PESUMABLY
CSIRO'S REMAINING 32 DIVISIONS, 4 UNITS AND ASSORTED OTHER
FACILITIES WILL NOT BE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY TRANSFER.

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DECISION HAS PROVOKED STORM OF PROTEST FROM SEVERAL CSIRO

OFFICIALS, INCLUDING DR. JERRY PRICE, CSIRO CHAIRMAN, ON GENERAL GROUNDS THAT TRANSFER WILL UNDERMINE CSIRO'S AUTONOMY, MORALE, SCIENTIFIC CAPABILITIES AND OBJECTIVITY.

2. SCIENCE LIAISON OFFICER HAS DISCUSSED EFFECT OF PLANNED TRANSFER OF SESU, AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR AUST. PARTICIPATION IN CCMS SOLAR ENERGY PILOT STUDY, WITH LATTIMORE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, INDUSTRIAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES BRANCH, CSIRO. LATTIMORE SAYS THAT PILOT STUDY MOU (REF C), WHICH WE DELIVERED TO CSIRO MAY 28, HAD NOT BEEN SIGNED AT TIME TRANSFER DECISION ANNOUNCED. DEPARTMENT OF MINERALS AND ENERGY MUST NOW APPROVE BEFORE MOU CAN BE SIGNED. HOWEVER, LATTIMORE EXPECTS SIGNATURE (PROBABLY BY DME) WILL STILL TAKE PLACE, ALTHOUGH PROBABLY NOT BEFORE ANOTHER TWO OR THREE WEEKS. LATTIMORE ALSO SAYS ROGER MORSE, SESU DIRECTOR, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY STILL ATTEND AUG. 4-6 PALO ALTO MEETING ON PILOT STUDY.

3. EMBASSY COMMENT: CSIRO HAS LONG ENJOYED PRESTIGIOUS AND ENVIABLE STATUS WITHIN GOA AS AUTONOMOUS EMPIRE WITH HIGH STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE. ALTHOUGH IT REPORTS TO MINISTER FOR SCIENCE, ORGANIZATION IS LARGELY INDEPENDENT OF NORMAL FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY, AND ITS EMPLOYEES ARE NOT PART OF PUBLIC (CIVIL) SERVICE. CONNOR HAD BEEN PRESSING TO BRING THESE FIVE CSIRO ENTITIES UNDER HIS CONTROL FOR MANY MONTHS, AND TRANSFER OF THEM IS SIGNIFICANT BUREAUCRATIC VICTORY FOR HIM. DETAILS OF TRANSFER, WHICH WOULD BE FIRST SPLITTING UP OF CSIRO SINCE IT WAS FOUNDED 50 YEARS AGO, HAVE STILL TO BE WORKED OUT. SOME CSIRO DIE-HARDS HAVE NOT GIVEN HOPE OF REVERSING DECISION, BUT THAT POSSIBILITY SEEMS UNLIKELY.
GREEN

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